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NEWS

Social Justice Network Seeks Information

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

August 28, 2023 . 8:55 PM — 3 min read

By Harrison Zeiberg, SCI AmeriCorps fellow serving at the Network for Social Justice

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Winchester, MA is a town of over 22,000 residents that, like its suburban neighbors of Lexington, Melrose and Stoneham, is in demographic transition. According to a recent update to the annual *Hate Crime Statistics* report released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there were 12,411 individuals who reported being the victim of a hate crime in 2021, a 12% increase from 2020. This is a phenomenon that has been observed across the country in rural, urban, and suburban communities alike.

While we have seen an increase in reported hate crimes, it is important to know that hate crimes are just one type of discriminatory behavior under the wider umbrella of bias-motivated incidents. A bias-motivated incident is defined as an incident motivated by prejudice based on race, gender and gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, have become increasingly more common in recent years. While hate crimes are the most brazen examples of a bias-motivated incident that often make national news and are followed by investigations from law enforcement and journalists, most bias-motivated incidents may not rise to the level of being labeled a crime, and accordingly there is often no established method for reporting such incidents.

Due to this underreporting there is no accurate understanding regarding the amount or nature of bias-motivated incidents in our communities. Without this understanding it can be easy for communities to believe, and act as if bias-motivated incidents do not occur in their town. This claim is not only inaccurate but also invalidates the experiences of people who have faced discrimination, harassment or exclusion.

Winchester has recently launched a Lived Experience Survey (LES), a project organized by the Network for Social Justice. The LES is designed to understand incidents of discriminatory, marginalizing, harassing, and exclusionary behavior experienced by anyone who lives, works, worships, studies or shops in town. The LES provides a form people can ac
their own to tell their experiences, with the guarantee of anonymity. The

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hope is that the data collected through this survey will make it possible to identify patterns of discrimination that exist in the community, elucidating the experiences of the most marginalized residents in town - those whose experiences are least known and whose voices are rarely heard.

In order to develop this survey, the Network for Social Justice turned to the expertise of human rights groups and organizations in nearby suburban towns and ultimately chose to adapt a survey tool used by groups in Wayland, Needham, and Shrewsbury (among others). The LES uses similar questions to those found in surveys of these towns. Before being launched, the Winchester survey was extensively beta tested by community volunteers, and translated from English into the other most prevalent languages spoken in Winchester: Mandarin, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole.

The ultimate goal of the LES initiative is to build an open source database of incidents of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion in order to enable any group in any sector of the community to develop their own strategies for advancing inclusion and equity. The survey also includes a question asking what could have been done to address the problem the individual faced, thus the strategies developed could include direct input from those most impacted. By gathering these first-hand accounts and making the anonymous data available for all, the organizers hope to shine a light on how Winchester as a community can do better in their reporting and understanding of bias-motivated incidents, and serve as a model for how similar communities can do the same.

The LES has received strong support from the town Select Board, Police Department, and a wide range of entities and nonprofits in Winchester. Moreover, as the survey is distributed, there will be more opportunities for individual residents, business owners and others to elevate the initiative within their circles. The underlying rationale is that a Lived Exp Survey is replicable. The more communities that are able to adopt such a

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survey, the more likely it is that we can achieve a more accurate comparative regional understanding of how discrimination and marginalization is impacting individuals in suburbs across the Commonwealth, an understanding that rests on data that has thus far proved elusive.

The LES was made possible thanks to funding from a State of Massachusetts Earmark Grant from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services.

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Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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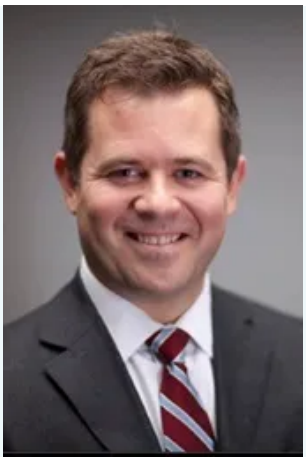

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Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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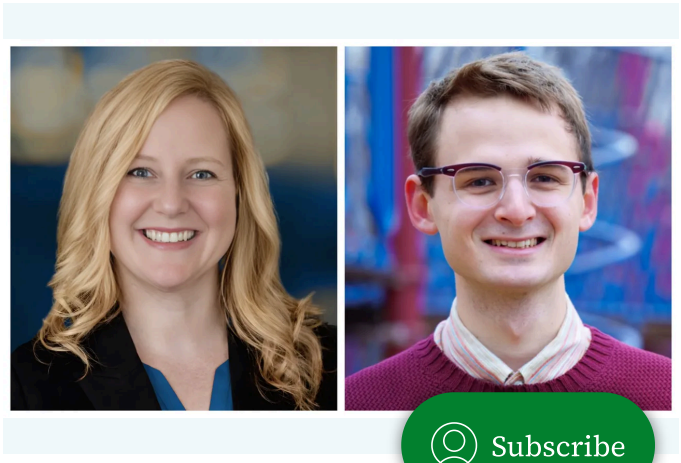

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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March 4, 2026

RIPLEY PRESENTS
SYLDASON: YOU ARE WELCOME HERE
MARCH 13, 2026
7:30 PM
Sylvie Zakarian, marimba and Daniela Tosic, voice
Featuring folk and classical works by Gomidas,
Hovhaness, Minkin, Radan, Tantchev, and Tassone.
fcc-winchester.com/ripleychapel

EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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